

Nevada, California and Florida have all addressed their respective gang problems through stringent legislation and penalty enhancements for offenders with the research on the effectiveness and efficacy of increasing penalties, to prevent, deter and mitigate gang activity, being scant with study findings being mixed or inconclusive.

In short, we simply don't know if gangbuster type bills actually deter gang crime. Research on the use of civil injunctions was also included and suggests some modest success in limited areas.

Data from the Commission's prior 1999 and 2004 research studies, as well as data from the current 2007 law enforcement survey, were used to produce estimates of future gang involvement and to extrapolate a statewide projection for 2012. The limited data indicates there could be more than 41,300 gang members in North Carolina in 2012. Operating under a more conservative model produced an estimate of slightly more than 29,000 gang members.

The gang situation in North Carolina appears to be at a crossroads with a greater awareness and increased reporting of gang activity, on the part of law enforcement, yet the majority of the state's recognized gangs do not appear to be as problematic as gangs that have become institutionalized as found in Los Angeles, Chicago and other major cities across the country. Drug related offenses and vandalism continue to be the most commonly occurring offenses which are associated with the gangs identified in this study as well as those identified in the Analysis Center's earlier research. While national survey data indicate a leveling off in the number of gangs and gang members data suggest that North Carolina may be lagged in this respect and has not experienced a plateau effect yet (National Youth Gang Center, 2007). This produces a promising opportunity to address the gang issue cautiously without denial and without undue panic. Policy makers and criminal justice practitioners